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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS PREVENTIVE DEPLOYMENT FORCE PURSUANT TO SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1110 (1997)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1110 (1997) of 28 May 1997. By that resolution the Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) until 30 November 1997 and to start, as at 1 October 1997, taking into account the conditions prevailing at that time, a two-month phased reduction of the military component by 300 all ranks. In the same resolution, the Council requested that I keep it regularly informed about any relevant developments and review the composition, deployment, strength and mandate of UNPREDEP as outlined in my report of 12 May 1997 (S/1997/365 and Add.1), taking into consideration the situation prevailing at that time in the region, in particular in the context of elections in Albania, as well as to report to the Council by 15 August 1997.

II. COMPOSITION, DEPLOYMENT, STRENGTH AND MANDATE OF THE UNITED NATIONS PREVENTIVE DEPLOYMENT FORCE

2. Since my last report to the Security Council on 12 May 1997 (S/1997/365 and Add.1), the composition, strength and mandate of UNPREDEP have remained unchanged. The mission continues to be headed by my Special Representative, Mr. Henryk J. Sokalski (Poland). The military component is headed by the Force Commander, Brigadier-General Bent Sohnemann (Denmark).

A. Military component

3. During the reporting period, some elements of the military component were redeployed in accordance with paragraph 2 of Security Council resolution 1105 (1997) of 9 April 1997 and paragraph 3 of resolution 1110 (1997). The number of observation posts along the western border of the mission area has increased. Currently, the Nordic Battalion mans eight posts on a 24-hour basis along the northern and western border and three temporary posts, also on a

24-hour basis, in the area of Lake Ohrid. The increase by three observation posts has effectively enlarged the area of responsibility of the Nordic Battalion, whose patrol line is now over-extended. The United States Battalion mans eight observation posts and patrols along a considerably smaller area of responsibility. Since the Nordic Battalion assumed responsibility for the three new observation posts, the United States Battalion has taken over the tasks of guarding the Headquarters and providing the main quick reaction force.

4. In addition to the community and border patrols conducted by the Force's civilian police and military observers, UNPREDEP military units also conduct patrols in the border areas. In the past three months, they conducted over 220 patrols per week and observed an average of some 153 patrols each week by the armed forces of Albania, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the host country. Observed illegal smuggling incidents decreased substantially during the period from early spring 1997.

5. In paragraph 4 of my report of 12 May, I drew to the Council's attention the fact that military units of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and of the host country had increased the number of patrols in their respective territories up to the old administrative border of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Recently, both sides informed the Force Commander that, while they would continue to permit UNPREDEP to patrol on the basis of visible and key features of the terrain - including crossing the administrative border when topographical constraints made this a more convenient way of passing from one part of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to another - they retained their sovereign right to patrol their respective territories up to the old administrative border. Neither side has expressed any concern as to a danger of armed clashes occurring between their patrols in the border areas.

6. Along the western border, United Nations soldiers have been exposed to frequent cross-border shooting from Albania, either by armed groups of illegal border-crossers or by other individuals. On a few occasions, UNPREDEP observation towers were deliberately shot at, resulting in one soldier being slightly injured. Active community patrolling by military observers has contributed to the easing of some tensions in the border area and the initiation of regular meetings between the mayor of Debar in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and his counterparts in several Albanian communities across the border has been particularly useful as a confidence-building measure. The situation along the border is gradually returning to normal.

B. Civilian component

7. The civilian component of UNPREDEP continues to play an important role in the implementation of the good offices mandate of my Special Representative. It maintains an active dialogue with the authorities and other political forces in the country in order to facilitate the mutual exchange of views and to encourage political and inter-ethnic communication and interaction. The political and humanitarian branch of the civilian component also maintains liaison with various segments of the public and the authorities in order to assess domestic and external developments that might threaten the country's stability.

8. In the past two years, with the support of several Governments and international organizations, and with the use of extrabudgetary resources, UNPREDEP has successfully advanced the good offices component of the operation. A number of major developmental projects on social integration and national capacity- and institution-building have been initiated and have led to a substantial inflow of international experience to the host country. These projects have played a significant role in promoting mutual confidence and good will across society.

9. In the absence of a United Nations resident coordinator, my Special Representative continues to coordinate all the United Nations activities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. He also ensures cooperation with the regional organizations monitoring developments in the area. Close collaborative efforts have been pursued between UNPREDEP and the Spillover Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Several joint initiatives in good offices by my Special Representative and the Head of the OSCE Mission have been aimed at underscoring the determination of the international community further to strengthen peace and stability in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

10. The civilian police component of the mission represents an important asset to the operation. Conducting some 14 patrols a day, its monitoring of the border areas has provided a unique tool for liaison with the judicial and police authorities and with the population of the host country, including, in particular, the ethnic minorities. As a complement to the tasks of the civilian police, a special project on crime prevention and criminal justice, which includes a training programme for the police, has been designed by the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division and UNPREDEP, in cooperation with the host country's Ministry of Internal Affairs.

11. The small public information component of the mission has developed and implemented an active information programme to raise local and international awareness about the work of the first United Nations preventive deployment operation. In cooperation with the local media, it is vigorously promoting an objective image of the United Nations. Its daily services also include monitoring of media coverage of major developments on the local political scene.

12. UNPREDEP's administration has adapted to the responsibility of providing essential services to a fully independent mission. The administrative structure and staff have been modified to meet the requirements of a small mission.

III. OPERATIONAL COHERENCE, EFFICIENCY AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS

13. An integrated approach by all the components of UNPREDEP to the tasks at hand has enhanced the mission's operational coherence and efficiency. Efforts continue to streamline mandate delivery and effect greater savings. A combination of professional skills in the Force has contributed considerably to high levels of coordination and proficiency.

14. Enhanced effectiveness in administration has been accomplished through the consolidation of numerous tasks. Some sections with related functions have been

merged to ensure cost-efficient and effective use of staff with similar responsibilities. Pooling of common skills has eliminated the underutilization of personnel and reduced the need for additional recruitment during absences on leave. Staff positions in certain areas of administrative servicing are likely to be reduced once the national contingents assume more responsibility for their equipment.

15. Greater efficiency has been achieved in the substantive areas of the operation by coordinating very closely the functions of the battalions, the military observers and the civilian police. All these elements schedule their operations so as to ensure optimal monitoring and reporting capability and community patrolling, both during the day and in the evenings.

IV. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

16. During the past three months, inter-ethnic relations within the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia suffered a setback as a result of a controversy over the public display of flags of national minorities. On 4 June 1997, the Constitutional Court of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia decided that Albanian national flags should not be displayed in front of the town halls of Gostivar and Tetovo. The mayors of the two towns defied the ruling and gave no indication of their readiness to remove the flags when, on 8 July, the National Assembly adopted a new compromise law on the use of flags by the ethnic nationalities. On 9 July, the Government launched a massive law-enforcement operation in Gostivar to remove Albanian and Turkish flags hoisted in front of the municipal building. The municipality of Tetovo was also partly affected by a similar action. During clashes with the police, three demonstrators died in Gostivar and many were wounded in what appeared to be an excessive use of force by government special police forces. In the wake of the Gostivar events, a number of demonstrators were called by the police for "informative talks", a practice restricted by the new law on criminal procedures. Some of the demonstrators complained of brutal methods of interrogation. Amidst severe criticism of the police action by its ethnic Albanian coalition partner, the Government established a ministerial commission to investigate the events and recently presented its findings in a report to the National Assembly. The consideration of the report has been postponed until after the summer recess.

17. A few days before the events in Gostivar, a unification congress of two major ethnic Albanian opposition parties was held in an atmosphere of nationalist fervour. The congress called for parallel government structures, autonomous institutions, a pan-Albanian parliament and ethnic regionalization. The appearance of black-shirted paramilitary guards in Tetovo during the congress was a disquieting manifestation of ethnic extremism.

18. In its resolution 1110 (1997), the Security Council welcomed the significant progress made by the Governments of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in developing their mutual relations in many areas and reiterated its call on the two Governments to implement in full their Agreement of 8 April 1996 (see S/1996/291, appendix), in particular regarding the demarcation of their mutual border. During a visit to Belgrade in early July by the Prime Minister of the host country, agreements

were signed on cultural education, sports, scientific and technological cooperation and on the suspension of the visa regime between the two countries. Although some progress has been made, no complete agreement has yet been reached on the outstanding demarcation of the border. The Joint Border Commission continues to meet on a regular basis and to focus on resolving the disputed border areas it had previously identified, but the results of its work have thus far fallen short of the expectations and the public statements of intent of the two parties in this regard.

19. While my Special Envoy, Mr. Cyrus Vance, actively pursues his efforts to arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement in the name-related dispute, cooperation between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece in different fields has been steadily growing.

V. OBSERVATIONS

20. As the Council will recall, in my letter of 3 April 1997 to the President of the Security Council (S/1997/276), I requested a suspension in the reduction of the UNPREDEP military component decided by the Council in its resolution 1082 (1996) of 27 November 1996 in view of the situation in Albania. I noted that, while there appeared to be no imminent danger of the problems in Albania spilling over to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the crisis in that country was causing great anxiety to the host Government. In my report to the Council of 12 May 1997, I reported that uncertainty still prevailed in Albania and that the lack of a perceptible and early change in the situation in that country could lead to another explosion of internal violence, which might have a negative impact on neighbouring countries. Since my last report, and despite some difficulties, parliamentary elections were held in Albania from 29 June to 6 July. In its final report on the elections, OSCE noted that the results of these elections should be the foundation for a strong, democratic system in Albania. OSCE further recalled that the international community expects a major effort towards national reconciliation in Albania after the elections. As the presence of the multinational force is ending, I welcome the international community's commitment to continue to support the efforts of Albania to normalize its internal security situation and to revive and reconstruct its economic and social life.

21. The underlying justification for the successive extensions of the mandate of UNPREDEP prior to the crisis in Albania has been to prevent conflicts elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia from spilling over or threatening the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It is evident that the situation in the country has been and still is intimately linked to the overall situation in the region, in particular at its borders. However, the host Government's relations with its neighbours have continued to strengthen, as have its relations with other members of the international community. In addition, the country's active participation in a wide-range of international organizations and programmes, including the Partnership for Peace programme of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) PHARE programme, are further signs of its enhanced international standing and capability. These are all welcome and positive developments that promise to reinforce the maintenance of calm in the country.

22. Internally, however, economic and social problems continue to pose a significant threat to the country's integration and long-term stability and further exacerbate inter-ethnic tensions. These internal problems give rise to the question of whether the current mandate of UNPREDEP is relevant to the present situation and, as my predecessor has stated, whether it can be implemented with fewer resources. Taking into account the new developments, it seems advisable to pursue the implementation of the Council's decision to start, as at 1 October 1997, a two-month phased reduction of the military component of UNPREDEP by 300 all ranks, bearing in mind the conditions prevailing over that time in the region. In the meantime, I have requested my Special Representative and the Force Commander to continue to explore the most practical options for flexible redeployment of the Force in the remaining months of the mandate taking into consideration the situation in the region and the mandate of the Force.

23. As the international community's involvement in the region will be necessary for some time to come, and given the request by the authorities of the host country to maintain an international presence, I have instructed my staff to begin intensive consultations immediately with the host Government, other international organizations and interested Member States on the type of international presence that would be most appropriate for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia after 1 December 1997. The results of these consultations will be reflected in my report preceding the termination of the current mandate of UNPREDEP on 30 November 1997.

24. In concluding this report, I wish to express my gratitude to the Governments who have made their military and police personnel available to UNPREDEP for their contribution to the success of the mission. I also wish to pay tribute to my Special Representative, Mr. Henryk Sokalski, and to the Force Commander, Brigadier-General Bent Sohnemann, as well as to all the personnel under their command, for their dedication and perseverance in carrying out the tasks entrusted to them by the Security Council.

Annex

Composition and strength of the military and civilian police elements of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force as at 7 August 1997

	Military			
Nationality	Operational	Headquarters	Military observers	Civilian police
Argentina	-	-	1	-
Bangladesh	-	-	2	-
Belgium	-	-	1	-
Brazil	-	-	2	-
Canada	-	-	1	-
Czech Republic	-	-	1	-
Denmark	38	9	1	-
Egypt	-	-	1	-
Finland	350	13	1	6
Ghana	-	-	1	-
Indonesia	50	1	2	-
Ireland	-	-	3	-
Jordan	-	-	2	2
Kenya	-	-	2	-
Nepal	-	-	1	-
New Zealand	-	-	1	-
Nigeria	-	-	1	4
Norway	38	5	2	-
Pakistan	-	-	2	-
Poland	-	-	2	-
Portugal	-	-	1	-
Russian Federation	-	-	2	2
Sweden	32	9	1	-
Switzerland	-	-	1	4
Turkey	-	-	-	4
Ukraine	-	-	1	2
United States of America	487	11	-	-
Total	995	48	36	24